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Kevin Haines* and Anje Dijk

Translating language policy into practice: Language and culture policy at a Dutch university

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Abstract: The CEFR will only achieve its potential in higher education if it is embedded in a meaningful way in the wider processes of the university. One means of embedding the CEFR is through policy, and in this article we report the development of a language policy in the broader context of internationalization at a Dutch university. We describe some the challenges involved in developing and extending this policy to stakeholders across the complex environment of a modern university, particularly from the perspective of one of the key players in this process, the university Language Centre. A growth of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes has coincided with a greater emphasis on internationalization in the university's strategy, and this has resulted in the establishment of an International Classroom (IC) project and a supporting Language and Culture (L&C) policy. The L&C policy aims to be both top down and bottom up, with a dual language focus on English and Dutch, while also recognizing the inter-relation between linguistic and intercultural skills. We believe that the growth of EMI programmes has acted as a catalyst for the extension of the L&C policy beyond the EMI setting to the university as a whole, and that the CEFR can play a role in providing a bridge from an EMI-focused perspective on internationalization to a discussion of language policy as it affects the entire university community.

Keywords: language policy, language centre, CEFR, dual languages, culture, higher education, internationalization

1 Introduction: Background and context

The CEFR (Council of Europe 2001) will only achieve its potential in higher education if it is embedded in a meaningful way in the wider processes of the university. One means of achieving this potential is through policy, and in this

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article we report the ongoing development of a Language and Culture (L&C) policy at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands). This implementation process can only be properly understood in the broader context of the internationalization efforts at the university, which are the focus of an institution-wide International Classroom (IC) project running from 2014 to 2020. The L&C policy is seen as one of the foundation stones upon which this International Classroom project can build, providing a framework of support for the defined language needs of all stakeholders involved in internationalization across the university. The CEFR is one of the main frameworks of reference used during the definition of the policy, and the University Language Centre is one of the key partners in the implementation process.

The L&C policy aims to be both top down and bottom up, with a dual language focus on English and Dutch, while also recognizing the interrelation between linguistic and intercultural skills. The scope of the current article is to describe some of the main issues that emerged during the initial development of the project, with specific reference to the CEFR, while also highlighting the perspective of one of the key players in the process, the university Language Centre. This discussion of language policy at the University of Groningen should be understood in the context of internationalization trends in Dutch higher education, in which we see a rapid growth of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes, not only at master's level but also at bachelor's level, for a combination of the reasons summarised by Wilkinson (2013: 7–11), which include practical, idealistic, educational, survival and financial. At the University of Groningen, this trend has already resulted in over 78 English-medium master's programmes as well as 26 English-medium bachelor's programmes (2014 figures). In terms of mobility, the latest figures show that 12% of students at the University of Groningen come from abroad, while 20% of students do part of their study abroad. This mobility and the increase in EMI programmes is part of a wider development in higher education that is particularly prominent in northern Europe; see, for example Airey et al. (2015) in relation to the development of EMI in the Nordic countries.

We have previously discussed the complexity of the linguistic demands on students (Haines et al. 2013a) and academic teaching staff (Haines et al. 2013b) in EMI programmes in the Netherlands. However, these observations were focused largely on language use within the formal curriculum, in classes delivered through English and in the English-medium academic writing produced by students as a direct result of these classes. These studies did not extend into the informal curriculum (Leask 2015), we did not discuss languages other than English, and we did not address the language needs of other stakeholders and

support staff in the international higher education environment (such as course administrators, student support services, and front desk staff). The development of the L&C policy has given us an opportunity to extend our focus in several directions.

Firstly, we shift the emphasis on language issues in order to address the needs of all stakeholders across the university, including students, academic teaching staff, academic support staff, and non-academic staff. Secondly, we focus not only on the formal curriculum but also on the informal and, where possible, the hidden curriculum, which has been defined by Leask as “the various unintended, implicit and hidden messages sent to students – messages we may not even be aware we are sending” (Leask 2015: 9). In fact, we recognize a complex learning and communication environment in which these implicit and hidden messages are sent to and from students as well as to and from all the various categories of staff described above. The L&C policy therefore extends beyond the classroom and across the whole university community. Thirdly, we extend the discussion to include other languages, particularly Dutch, the first language for the vast majority of stakeholders and a target second language for incoming students and staff. The policy also recognizes and encourages the learning of other languages when this is appropriate for the academic or professional progress of the individual, i. e. when it is fit for purpose. For this reason, the policy at the University of Groningen has been termed an “inclusive, dual-plus approach” (Language Policy Task Force 2014).

A further fundamental issue that has been recognized during the development of the L&C policy at the University of Groningen is that the diversity observed in EMI programmes, and indeed the diversity across the academic community, is not limited to issues of linguistic proficiency or deficit. This explains our use of “Language *and* Culture” (L&C) in the policy document and the inclusion of specific recommendations for multiculturalism in the Language Policy Task Force (2014) document. We understand the culturally-embedded and value-laden nature of activities in the university, for instance when discussing the role of the teacher and the ways in which knowledge is created and used. As Lauridsen (2013) has pointed out, our international classrooms produce learning through a complex combination of disciplinary content with pedagogy, intercultural competence and linguistic proficiency. It is through an interweaving of all these aspects that learning takes place. To focus primarily on grammar and vocabulary when assessing a student’s linguistic performance would be to underestimate the complexity of the event, and this would also be a missed opportunity in terms of the feedback that could be provided. Similarly, if a language teacher is asked to assess a teacher’s English in an EMI setting, they may overlook the teacher’s ability

to compensate for limitations in language with their teaching experience and didactic skills. And when thinking beyond the classroom, a language teacher assessing the oral English proficiency of a human resources advisor in the context of his/her occupation, might discover that culturally-embedded assumptions create misunderstandings between advisor and client.

Diversity in the university thus confronts university staff with new challenges, which involves not only using a second language but also other related adjustments, including the use of different tools in their daily practice. For teachers and their students, the EMI classroom can be a leap into the unknown if it is not managed and designed in a structured and explicit way, but it also functions as a catalyst for reflection on teaching:

To the academic staff, internationalisation thus appears as a change process, which may fuel the development of more reflective teaching practices or indeed lead to the formation of “new academic identities”. (Tange 2010: 139, citing Hellstén 2008)

In other words, this international classroom also causes teachers to reconsider their approaches to teaching and provides fresh impetus for them to develop as professionals. The same may go for other university staff, for whom language and intercultural skills may provide a stimulus for a renewed focus on their professional development. Indeed, we believe that the extension of EMI programmes in Groningen has acted as a catalyst for the extension of the L&C policy beyond the EMI setting to the university as a whole, and we argue that the CEFR can play a role in providing a bridge from an EMI-focused perspective on internationalization to a discussion of language policy as it affects the entire university community.

In this article we therefore argue that the L&C policy is an essential enabler for all university staff to take steps towards a consistent and explicit approach not only in their use of languages but also in their awareness of cultures. A lack of such consistency, explicitness and awareness is a barrier both to learning and to professional behaviour across the university. The CEFR has considerable potential as a framework of reference in shaping this process and in making the policy meaningful at the level of the classroom and workplace. We have previously stated that “the CEFR is increasingly becoming the instrument of choice for the assessment of language proficiency at universities across Europe” (Haines et al. 2013a: 77). As we move from policy development towards policy implementation, might the CEFR also become one of the key instruments of choice for all stakeholders involved in the development of language policies across our universities?

2 Catalysts for language policy implementation

In EMI settings, the change of the language of instruction from Dutch to English produces uncertainty, which affects stakeholders in international classrooms across the university. We have discussed above how this uncertainty extends throughout the organization, and this raises questions in relation to all activities, including the recruitment of teachers, the professional development of staff, and of course in the communication which has traditionally taken place through Dutch but which now needs to consider audiences for whom English is a *lingua franca*. Both English and Dutch now play important roles in the day-to-day life of the university, affecting the quality of the education and the quality of the professional experiences of all members of staff as well as students; hence the need for policy.

We believe that the processes that have started in EMI programmes and international classrooms often function as a catalyst, providing the initial impetus for the development of policies which can then be extended to other domains and professions across the university. In Section 2.1, we consider the role of the CEFR in the development of the L&C policy. In Section 2.2, we focus on how issues related to the International Classroom have driven the development of this policy. Then, in Section 3, we consider practical issues and possible instruments, notably tools that are related to the CEFR, for the implementation of the policy for the various groups of stakeholders across the university. In each of these sections, we discuss the perspective of the Language Centre.

2.1 The CEFR as a catalyst for language policy implementation

Initially, a guiding policy can provide a common point of reference for discussing and understanding experiences, clarifying who needs what kind of support and who has the responsibility to provide it. It also clarifies who has the means to provide this support by assigning the necessary budget. CercleS has proposed that such policies should relate to all stakeholders:

A Language Policy of an Institution in Higher Education should address issues at all levels of the organisation (university, faculty, programmes, courses etc.) and be co-owned by all stakeholders and the whole university community (governing bodies, teaching, research, administrative staff and students). (CercleS 2011: 2)

More recently, the extension of such language policy to include a focus on culture has been proposed by the IntlUni project, a European network of 38 higher education institutions in 27 countries:

Above all... institutions should develop an inclusive and enabling language and culture policy, in which the role of an academic lingua franca, other languages and cultures is clearly defined. (Cozart et al. 2015: 20)

In 2014 the Board of the University of Groningen approved an L&C policy on the basis of a guiding document produced by a task force under the chairmanship of former Rector Magnificus Dr Professor Frans Zwarts (Language & Culture Policy Task Force 2014). The Task Force consisted of experts in issues impacting upon language in internationalization from within and beyond the university. By the end of 2014 it had produced a discussion document (Language Policy Task Force 2014), which was adopted as university policy early in 2015. This document makes specific definitions in relation to language needs, drawing on the CEFR:

For students, language proficiency should be assessed in relation to the specific programme entrance requirements and learning outcomes/graduate attributes. The “Can Do” descriptors from the European Framework should be used for assessment in addition to international tests to further develop academic communication and study skills throughout the programme. (Language Policy Task Force 2014: 7)

For staff, to establish an overall quality control framework for assessing and monitoring (in terms of “Can Do”) the English of all staff (academic and administrative) and provide adequate feedback and a line of support (“Can Do” statements refer to competences defined in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2001). (Language Policy Task Force 2014: 10)

Through this policy document, therefore, a first step was taken at central policy level towards recognizing the value of the CEFR in the University of Groningen as a guiding framework in the description of language needs.

The next step in implementation of the L&C policy is for committees in each faculty to define their specific needs in relation to language policy in the context of internationalization. Such a needs analysis inevitably involves the discussion of the required levels for staff and students, and at an early stage it becomes clear that the “Can Dos” are relevant but need adapting or exemplifying to meet the contextual needs of the users in any particular discipline. Consequently, given its expertise in language assessment and its experience of applying the CEFR in practice, it is logical that the university Language Centre will play a key role in the implementation of the policy, in close partnership with disciplinary experts. However, as Dijk et al. (2013) explain, in practice when universities start to develop a language policy, the expertise of language centres is often overlooked. This is not because language centres lack knowledge or experience, but often simply because the position of the language centre in the university does not give it access to the policy-making process.

Whenever policy-related issues such as language policy are discussed, LCs are often overlooked or their expertise is played down: they are not, or are involved too late, in drafting language policies. (Dijk et al. 2013: 360)

Furthermore, the university central body often has only a limited image of the expertise, the experience and the vision of language centres: for instance, the university may expect the language centre to offer a generic set of courses and training sessions to bring students and staff from point A to point B (from level A2 to B2, for example) but not expect the language centre to be able to contribute at policy level. Meanwhile, language centres may contribute to this image by successfully fulfilling this limited role so that the essence of their day-to-day work becomes the definition of their contribution to the university: in other words, they become very good at making sure that the learner reaches the next level and reporting on this progress, and they become defined by this practical level of achievement.

In a sense, therefore, the CEFR contributes to this limited image of language centres because of the instrumental way that provision is described: there is a desire for the result of the course to be described clearly and in a way that can be tested, which results in descriptions which focus on courses taking learners from level A2 to B1, for example. For these reasons, there is a tendency not to look beyond these indicators. However, as we will describe in Section 3, the involvement of a language centre in the development of language and culture policy can result in a more effective use of the expertise of the language centre. We envisage a language centre working closely together with programme managers to define contextualised “Can Do” statements, which in turn would lead to the development of a range of support in close co-operation with a programme manager or faculty. Such close cooperation between language and disciplinary experts would also promote a more mature understanding throughout the university of the value of the CEFR as a framework of reference.

2.2 The international classroom as a catalyst for language policy implementation

In constructing its vision and strategies on internationalization, the University of Groningen is being guided by the quality criteria described by CeQuint (Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation), which is driven by the European Consortium for Accreditation (Aerden 2014). CeQuint draws attention to the value of international and intercultural learning outcomes in its assessment standards and criteria for certification (Aerden and Weber 2013).

The importance of working on international and intercultural learning outcomes is underlined in the recent work of Carroll (2015) and Leask (2015), who both draw on the same set of principles or standards, noting the importance of being context-specific. It is essential that these international and intercultural learning outcomes relate to the disciplinary and professional needs of diverse students (Carroll 2015: 115). We argue that this principle of being context-specific in order to be meaningful also applies to the work of language teachers and language centres in their use of the CEFR as a tool in the definition of learning needs and learning outcomes, and that this will be relevant not only to students but to other language learners such as academic teaching and support staff.

To achieve these standards, the University of Groningen has established a number of parallel processes. Firstly, case studies, described locally as “pilots”, have been set up which describe existing good practice and help define principles for the international classroom that may guide practice across faculties. Secondly, building on these “pilots”, and with specific reference to Carroll (2015) and Leask (2015), an over-arching conceptual framework has been developed incorporating essential principles for quality. Thirdly, the subject of this article, an “enabling” institutional language policy has been adopted which will facilitate implementation of the international classroom and an international university community.

The case studies undertaken as part of the International Classroom project have brought us a greater understanding of the way in which mobility can help students to recognize the value of language as a factor in their professional development. For example, one student in the International Bachelor's programme at the Faculty of Medicine described the role of language during her three-month placement period in a developing country in Africa: “Even if I only spoke ten words of the local language, people really appreciated it. If you try to invest in their culture, people like it” (Haines 2015: 33). The case study at the Medical Faculty also reveals significant variation in what students “can do” in their academic activities. For example, the comments of two students, Vera and Vincent, reveal varying experience when it comes to academic writing skills:

They expect you to be able to do academic writing, but you have never done it before. There's also a lot of diversity in what has been done before. It would be the first time for me to do it in Dutch too, although the language would be a lot better. (Vera, Dutch 2nd-year student of International Bachelor's in Medicine, Groningen)

In the International Baccalaureate I had learnt to write essays, to structure essays, to express myself in essays. So since I had done the IB I knew how to write an essay and I knew how to put my ideas down nicely. And I thought there was quite some discrepancy

in the quality of the essays. (Vincent, Lithuanian graduate of International Bachelor's in Medicine, Groningen)

We know that the CEFR can help us to understand these differing needs, describing for example the qualitative differences in academic English between a student at level B (B2) and a student at level C (C1) (Council of Europe 2001: 62). But what should we actually do about these differences in learning backgrounds and in language proficiency as the diversity of students and staff grows in our increasingly internationalized university?

Observations of problem-based learning sessions and small-group projects during our case studies at Medical Science and Industrial Product Design reveal patterns in student (learning) and teacher (teaching) activities that will be familiar to the many English teachers who are used to providing their students with contextually-related or discipline-embedded support in the use of English in academic activities in EMI settings (see Table 1).

Table 1: Observed activities of students and teachers in EMI small-group teaching at University of Groningen.

Students: read, summarise, discuss in pairs, present, discuss in group, read more, present again, discuss with expert, receive feedback (listen), write draft, etcetera
Teachers: provide access to expert knowledge, facilitate the group process, act as sounding board (listen), give constructive feedback, assess, etcetera
Observations of learning/teaching activities in two EMI sites at University of Groningen (Medical Science Groups/Product Design Groups) 2014

From this overview of teaching and learning activities, we can derive information about the contextualized language needs of those involved. Such small-group teaching is a specific type of educational and communicative event, and the language and intercultural skills needed therefore differ from those experienced in a traditional lecture theatre.

As well as the relationship between learner and teacher, the learning process is also affected by cultural diversity in the group. A good example of this inter-relation of language and cultural factors in the classroom is the perception of “silence”. Frambach et al. (2014) have described the effect of the language of instruction (English) on discussion behaviours in problem-based learning groups on three continents. Describing students in Hong Kong, they note that “concerns about loss of face would cause these students to remain silent – even if they felt they really had something to say – just because they did not know

how to say it” (Frambach et al. 2014: 1013). Yet Welikala (2012) shows that, with awareness and experience, silence may become a learning resource:

The Chinese learner has been very much considered a “passive learner” who does not contribute during lessons. But now, I know that silence is also very important for learning in some cultures. It is learning for me actually... now, I learn to be silent sometimes. (University teacher; Welikala 2012: 52)

Examples such as these help many programme managers, teachers and students to recognize that the international classroom produces specific needs in the university. These needs are underlined by principles such as those proposed by Leask (2015) and Carroll (2015). In countries like the Netherlands, where English is a second language, the adoption of such principles for quality in the international classroom depends on an L&C policy. And if an L&C policy is to be meaningful in terms of making a contribution to the quality of teaching and learning, it also needs to be embedded in other processes across the university, which involves many other stakeholders. Now we will consider in more detail the main groups of stakeholders that are to be supported by the policy, and discuss some of the tools and reference points that we have to hand. Again we will do so with particular reference to the role of the Language Centre and the use of the CEFR.

3 Translating language policy into practice: The role of the Language Centre in implementation across the university

The Language Centre at the University of Groningen has considerable experience in supporting students, academic staff and non-academic staff in the context of internationalization, in English, Dutch and, when appropriate, other modern languages. The L&C policy therefore provides an opportunity for the Language Centre, as one of the key players in the internationalization process in the university, to evaluate its approaches with these different target groups. It is also an opportunity to refine and extend its use of the CEFR through the specific tools that it has developed through its work with internal and external partners. Furthermore, the L&C policy provides a stimulus for the Language Centre to develop new tools where instruments do not already exist. Again, the CEFR provides us with a consistent framework of reference in these processes.

In line with the dual language approach (Dutch and English) described in the L&C policy, non-Dutch staff and students need to be enabled to use the

Dutch language, even if their work or studies are primarily in English. Non-Dutch students of the University of Groningen are entitled to follow free Dutch classes up to level B1. The content of those classes is tailored to the needs of students and the “Can Do” statements are contextualized to the student’s academic environment. Non-Dutch staff members are given the opportunity to learn Dutch through tailor-made courses geared specifically to their needs.

This fits in with the Dutch government’s Action Plan “Make it in the Netherlands!”, which has three aims, all associated with developing stable, long-term relationships with international students in order to strengthen the Netherlands’ knowledge economy:

1. Making all international students feel welcome in the Netherlands and encouraging them to start a career here;
2. Having as many international students as possible decide to work in the Netherlands after they graduate from a Dutch higher education institution, especially in sectors with good labour market perspectives;
3. Ensuring that all international students stay connected to the Netherlands after completion of their study programme. (Nuffic 2015).

Furthermore, to stimulate and encourage staff and students to learn Dutch, the Language Centre at the University of Groningen has developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Introduction to Dutch through Future Learn (Lijmbach et al. 2015; van Engen 2015), providing some basic Dutch communication skills at level A1 to those interested in learning Dutch (<https://www.future-learn.com/courses/dutch>).

Below, we discuss the contribution of the Language Centre to the L&C policy in more detail, highlighting specific examples of activities which give the CEFR a specific role in the implementation process.

3.1 Students

For students in Groningen, the challenge in English is usually to produce work in the academic genre, which means they are generally expected to function at level C1 for writing and speaking by the end of their bachelor’s programme, when they generally write a bachelor’s thesis. To support students in moving from B2 to C1 (or indeed from C1 to C2) in the course of their studies has long been one of the main challenges facing the Language Centre. The CEFR has provided a mechanism through which this progress can be monitored consistently, and this was grounded initially in the work of the EMBED project which

“gave us the opportunity to develop local, contextualized samples of academic writing that would support the training and standardization of university teachers of English in the use of CEFR descriptors in the assessment of academic essays” (Haines et al. 2013a: 78).

Subsequently, the MAGICC project (Álvarez and Pérez-Cavana 2015; MAGICC 2015; Natri and Räsänen 2015) has incorporated the EMBED samples into its Transparency Tools, while also extending the discussion of learner performance from academic language skills to intercultural skills. MAGICC is a very good example of the way the CEFR can be incorporated into the daily practices of the university as a tool that supports the implementation of the L&C policy. According to Natri and Räsänen (2015: 87), “the main purpose of the MAGICC project was to conceptualise multilingual and multicultural communication competence for the higher education level and in this way complement the Council of Europe’s CEFR in areas that are not addressed in the CEFR”. MAGICC therefore provides a template designed to certify the multilingual and multicultural communication competences acquired during courses, and makes connections between communication across cultures and language learning as described in the CEFR. MAGICC enables learners to showcase their multilingual profile through a digital portfolio, with particular emphasis on the requirements of the labour market, and includes all the specific competences which make up their know-how in the different languages.

The MAGICC Transparency Tools (MAGICC 2015) contain authentic samples of students’ work to create shared understanding of the different reference levels of the CEFR and the three MAGICC levels for multilingual communication competences, and intercultural communication competences and strategies. In making the connection between language skills and intercultural skills, MAGICC provides an example of the tools available to the university for the implementation of its L&C policy. The EMBED and MAGICC projects have provided the Language Centre with useful tools for language support in the university, which show how it is possible to build on the framework of reference provided by the CEFR.

The Language Policy Task Force (2014) makes specific reference to these tools, amongst others, demonstrating a desire to exploit the available tools. However, the experience of the Language Centre is that CEFR levels and descriptors are too easily reduced to lists of bullet points, meaning that they are de-contextualized and the qualitative essence or meaning of CEFR-related definitions can be lost. Often the Language Centre is asked to help someone develop from B2 to C1 in English. But for the Language Centre the essence is to ensure that a learner can actively participate and make progress in their studies without language skills

or intercultural skills presenting an obstacle. Tools like MAGICC provide the L&C policy with an opportunity to move away from oversimplifications of progress expressed in terms of CEFR levels and towards the use of evidence and showcases of what language learners in our university “Can Do”.

3.2 Staff

Moving on to university staff, the CEFR provides a framework of reference that helps the Language Centre to determine which specific support, choices, local strategies and descriptors are necessary to set appropriate assessment tasks and facilitate subsequent language learning. The CEFR needs to be made meaningful in many different situations and contexts. The main questions for the Language Centre are how to do this effectively, and how to make sure that the whole community of the university is involved in this work. Some work has been done in resolving these issues in relation to the support and assessment of academic staff in their teaching roles both in Groningen (Haines et al. 2013b) and elsewhere, for example in the development of the Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff (TOEPAS) at the University of Copenhagen (Dimova and Kling 2015). But we need to bear in mind that because the L&C policy is directed at the whole university community, the discussion extends beyond academic teachers to other staff. We recognize that the CEFR is not specific enough to be immediately applicable, and this is true not only for lecturers but also, for example, for human resources advisors who need to communicate a large amount of highly specific and technical information and negotiate terms of employment in English. Should another level be added to the CEFR in such cases, as North has suggested (Sheehan and North 2010), or is it more a question of contextualizing the existing descriptors? This would involve addressing two questions: firstly, what is the best practice for contextualization in any given language and, secondly, what is the best practice for contextualization in any given situation?

We are aware of the fact that language skills are not stand-alone. Language is always used in combination with other skills, and there is always contextualization – both the lecturer and the human resources advisor might need to function at or just below C2 in English but the language they use and the context they use it in vary immensely. Assessment may show that they have the same global level of English, but neither of them would be equipped to take on the task of the other. So, to offer the most appropriate support, we believe it would be best to dive into a given staff member’s specific roles, tasks and context, to analyse exactly which language skills they need in their job and to contextualize the CEFR “Can Do” statements accordingly.

3.2.1 Academic staff

The Language Centre already assesses and supports academic staff in the context of their work, ensuring that the CEFR is not an abstract framework but an instrument that helps define the contribution of language in professional activity. This process, which involves recording lectures and giving detailed feedback with the CEFR C1 descriptors as a point of reference is described in more detail in Smiskova et al. (2011) and Haines et al. (2013b). The provision of meaningful feedback lies at the heart of the procedure because without this feedback the lecturer cannot easily set contextualized professional development goals. Furthermore, this kind of recording emphasizes that language skills do not stand alone: a good lecturer possesses not only language skills, but also didactic skills and intercultural skills (see Figure 1). And didactic skills may compensate to some extent for a lack of flexibility in language.

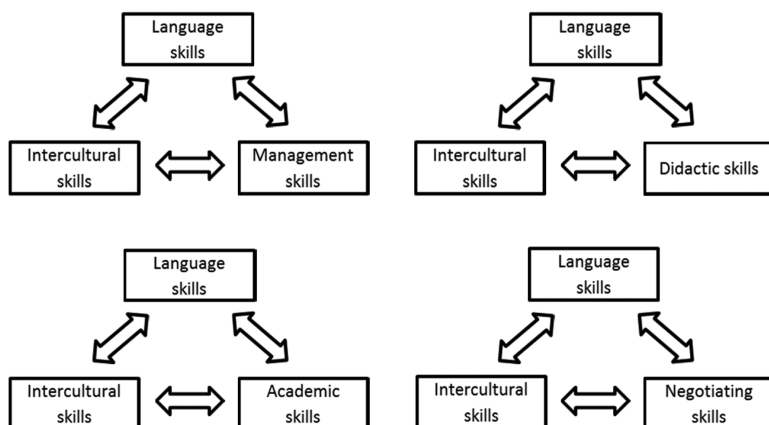


Figure 1: A combination of skills.

As a direct result of the L&C policy, it is now possible to take this approach one step further by integrating it structurally into the professional development programme followed by all university teachers, the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). The L&C policy includes a recommendation, developed by the university's Educational Support and Innovation unit (ESI) for an “international addendum” at Groningen to the nationally agreed university UTQ, which includes the need for teachers to “identify blockers and enablers for the ‘international classroom’ in course (and curriculum)” (Educational Support and

Innovation 2015). We can assume that language will be defined by some lecturers as an issue during the development of their UTQ portfolio, and that tailor-made feedback from Language Centre teachers will support this developmental process, as proposed by Haines et al. (2013b), making situated use of the CEFR “Can Do” descriptors. Meanwhile, multicultural competences will become an integral part of UTQ, and this creates a strong incentive for the Language Centre to cooperate closely with ESI, which is responsible for supporting the multicultural awareness of teaching staff. Such cooperation would represent transparent evidence of progress in relation to the L&C policy, redressing an historical fragmentation of provision into units which function independently of each other but whose work overlaps significantly in the context of internationalization.

3.2.2 Non-academic staff

Language and intercultural skills are essential to the creation of close relationships between people, which involves the establishment of mutual understanding through social interaction. When we consider the intended role of the CEFR, we understand that it is a valuable tool that helps us to define the language needs of people who want to communicate and who want to relate to each other in all walks of life. The CEFR is designed to support life-long learning, and it is therefore as relevant to non-academic staff as to academic staff: “language learning is necessarily a life-long task to be promoted and facilitated throughout educational systems, from pre-school through to adult education” (Council of Europe 2001: 5).

The mission of the Language Centre and the mission of the university’s L&C policy is to ensure that individual differences in language and culture do not hinder mutual understanding and individual development. Furthermore, it aims to solve any problems with language and cultural skills that might hinder communication or, in the case of non-academic staff, the ability to do their job. What we need is a tool that helps us to clearly define deficiencies and needs, and this is as true for non-academic staff as for the academic staff we have discussed above (Section 3.2.1).

For non-academic staff, support is required in language and intercultural skills at the right level, focusing on the appropriate situations, and geared to the relevant needs in those situations. This process of contextualization is not only specific to situations but is also language-specific, so this involves making definitions of needs for both Dutch and English. The L&C policy project group

has wondered if it would be sufficient or appropriate to make a global overview of the formal employment positions at a university, focussing on the amount of English (or Dutch) that a person in each position needs or encounters. Erasmus University Rotterdam has provided us with a useful reference tool in which language levels are defined in the following way (Figure 2):

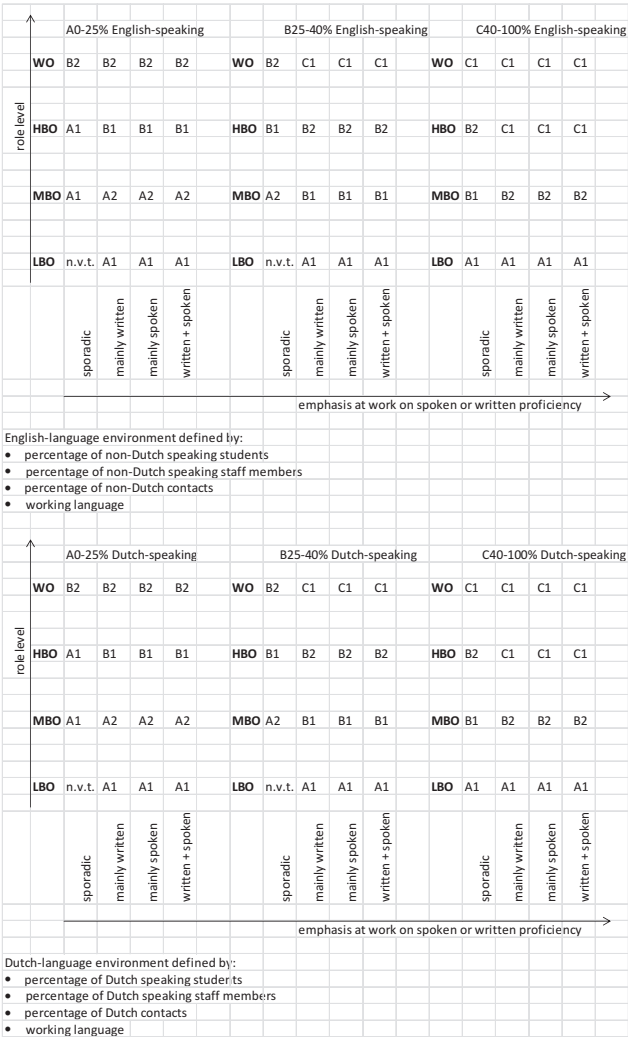


Figure 2: The Erasmus University Rotterdam Language Matrix.

The language requirements set are dependent on someone's position (the key tasks to which language skills are connected). Staff whose key tasks are related to oral or written communication (with students, colleagues or external parties) must have better language skills than back-office staff whose key tasks are more related to administrative support. Moreover, the environment in which the staff member performs his or her duties plays an important role in determining the extent to which bilingual skills are required. (Erasmus University Rotterdam 2013)

Discussion of this model within the L&C policy group has led us to consider what the following steps would be. How would we assess the staff members? What support would be offered? How would we do this for the various categories of employee, such as porters, canteen personnel or human resources officers? Our conclusion is that it would be most appropriate to dive into staff members' specific roles and tasks and contexts, to analyse exactly which language skills they need in their job and to contextualize CEFR "Can Do" statements accordingly for each language, as visualized in Figure 3.

How would we define their needs and levels? Would we provide every staff member with a specific list of "Can Do" statements, geared towards their job and

Porter	reading	writing	listening	speaking	spoken interaction
C2					
C1					
B2					
B1					
A2					
A1					

HR officer	reading	writing	listening	speaking	spoken interaction
C2					
C1					
B2					
B1					
A2					
A1					

Canteen caissiere	reading	writing	listening	speaking	spoken interaction
C2					
C1					
B2					
B1					
A2					
A1					

Figure 3: An imagined assessment grid (diving into people's specific roles, tasks and positions).

situation as we do for lecturers when focussing on their specific needs during on-the-job training? Could we relate this to annual performance appraisals? The L&C policy is making a valuable contribution in encouraging us to consider these kinds of questions.

Clearly it is essential that all stakeholders are involved in the ongoing implementation of the L&C policy, and in the case of staff we involve human resources experts who can advise us on a realistic approach when extending the policy beyond the scope of programmes and classrooms and across the wider university community. In this respect, an all-inclusive approach is obviously both desirable and challenging. It also seems feasible if it can be built into existing systems and procedures such as the UTQ and annual staff development and performance appraisals.

4 Discussion: From potential to implementation

As explained at the start of this article, the above processes are now at the implementation stage. Our ambition is to establish the L&C policy as a reality experienced by stakeholders across the university, and we believe that the following factors create the potential for this implementation.

Firstly, the policy is being instigated with support from the highest levels of the university. The implementation of the policy is therefore being supported financially, which means that the activities described above can be translated into “time”, and teachers, non-academic staff and students can work on their language needs without feeling that other aspects of their careers or their learning are being threatened.

Secondly, the implementation is embedded in a broader discourse about the international classroom so that stakeholders understand not only the need to give priority to languages within their daily practices, but also the reasons that lie behind this need. The International Classroom project highlights the value of the increasing diversity in the university as a resource that can be tapped into at the levels of classroom, programme and organization, and draws attention to the need to have a clear understanding of the implications for the use of languages, in our case English and Dutch in particular.

Thirdly, the policy draws on, and makes visible, existing expertise within the university. Units like the Language Centre and ESI are recognized for the contribution that they can make to the implementation of the L&C policy because of their experience in supporting the internationalization efforts of faculties across the university. This has helped us to understand the impact of

internationalization and EMI environments on a wide variety of stakeholders. It has also helped us to see the value of grounding implementation in established and recognized frameworks of reference, such as the CEFR and the UTQ, with which these units are already very familiar. Furthermore, the L&C policy provides a focus within which these units can cooperate and share their expertise, meaning that they are able to work together to produce new understandings of what internationalization means to staff and students in practical contexts across the university.

Fourthly, there is a recognition that the university can draw on existing external networks to benchmark its internationalization efforts, including L&C policy. Examples of good practice elsewhere, such as TOEPAS (Dimova and Kling 2015) or the Erasmus University Rotterdam Language Matrix, can help clarify the main issues and challenges involved in the definition of needs. The involvement of the university in projects such as MAGICC and the IntlUni network provides a wider frame of reference and an audience of “critical friends”, as does active involvement in specialist networks, including CercleS and the European Language Council. And the concrete intention of the university to take part in an internationally recognized process of accreditation (CeQuint) provides us with a high-stakes incentive to adapt this external input so that it is meaningful to our contexts.

However, we have found that it is not always easy to incorporate a broad framework like the CEFR into our activities in such a way that it becomes meaningful to stakeholders across the university. Many participants in L&C policy discussions still have only a vague notion of what the CEFR levels mean, and the Language Centre is still confronted with questions like “Is B1 the school leaving level?” or “Is C highest or lowest?”. And in daily usage, the CEFR is often reduced to level; rather than measuring progress or learning, it too often becomes associated with the achievement of minimum levels for entrance to universities (“Yes, she has C1 level English”) or deficiencies (“He only has A2 level Dutch”). One implication of addressing language issues through wider processes across the university is that the language solutions become embedded in other people’s daily practices, and this means that any tool needs to be transparent and accessible for audiences of non-linguists.

For non-linguists, the finer workings of the CEFR may yet remain a mystery. For the L&C policy, the challenge is to contextualize the language skills and language levels within the University of Groningen in such a way that it is clear what people need, what they must work on, and how they can move forward. At its most practical level, the L&C policy must be geared to making sure that staff and students can function optimally in the university community by reducing hindrances in the area of language and intercultural skills.

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Bionotes

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